

DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #108!

So here we are at #108: four years in and twenty-five hundred Manami Toyota jokes later and suddenly- WE'RE THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN. US wrestling does another line of coke and sucks a big dick in fabulous primetime glory while internet bedwetting wonks critique the production values of the shit as it pours out of your screen. All you got left here in our god-forsaken native wrestling promotions is twenty matches a year in ECW and the assorted WCWSN matches wrestled in front of baffled rubes who got wrangled into going to a WCWSN taping. SO FUCK ALL THAT, we're here with the REAL shit- the stuff that made you a wrestling fan to begin with way back when. Fuck ALL of them and their weak-ass shit- here is some of what you - the gentle reader- should give a shit about seeing. That's right! Fuck'em all and WELCOME TO SWEET SWEET MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE.....

~+~

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ BIG JAPAN BATTLESTATION- 6/20/1999
(DEAN RASMUSSEN)

God knows that we here at the Death Valley Driver Video Review love us some big piping hot heaping helpings of Supersleazy Japanese independent wrestling, but this one has the BEST death match I've ever seen- and I think I've seen all of them of note. Anyways, Big Japan ain't afraid to bring the choice wrestling before the shitty main event- so imagine my elation when the Main Event was the best thing on the card and- arguably THE MATCH OF THE YEAR. I partied and freaked out. DIG IT.

Minoru Fujita vs. Tomoaki Honma: I guess this was to show you that Tomoaki Honma is a good BattlARTS-approximated pseudo-shoot pro style wrestler who can do a reglar match before serving up the fucking GREAT Yamakawa/Honma Death Match of Death Matches. I guess this is Fujita's Big Japan swan song as he is now TAKA's junior partner and overall it's quite a good lil match- though Fujita ain't Hidaka so he never takes it to the mat to the best extent you've ever seen and is SOOOOOOOO not stiff-working enough to be BattlARTS 24-7 like his Ricky Morton-like partner the aforementioned Hidaka. Fujita is a perfect fit for MP actually, as it seems the Big Japan juniors are going all... fuck, how do describe it?... all IWA Puerto Rico with it's combo Lucha/Death Match/ basic US pro style conglom that doesn't leave much for an aspiring cutting edge highflyer/shootstyle boy- unless ya wanna go the Honma route. Trust me, ya gotta want it and Fujita is in a far better place for himself. Kinda pedestrian in it's scope with Fujita going for lotsa kneebars with Honma getting in the stiffer kicks but at least Honma does a residual bladejob as a simple headlock by Fujita opens up his scar tissue. Yes. Honma is right up there with the biggest bladefreaks you've ever seen. Ever.

Fantastik vs. Sere Beluro: This was as old school lucha as El Santo's MG, as it was so not at all about ANYTHING but an attempt to be really graceful. It didn't actually work that well in that respect, but the real earnest attempt to be all beautiful and shit makes it total Laucha Libre and thus work on a couple of levels. Beluro must be Fantastic's brother of something because he is

quite the Fobia to Fantastik's Psicosis. Fantastik hits a bunch of un-lucha finishers and we called it "really clipped".

Chappinger/Shadow Winger vs. Shunme Matsuzaki & Jun Kasai: Hey! That guy Chappinger who was so mediocre in the Michinoku Pro Mask Tourney 99 is actually.... wait for it.... MOTEGI!!!!!!!!!!!!!! YES! The Motegi In Every Junior Heavyweight Tournament On The Island Of Japan LAW is STILL in full effect!! KICK ASS! This is kinda a squash- as Matsuzaki and Kasai seem to be Motegi trainees- but Winger and Motegi are actually a good little crappy indie tag team as they hit some nice midgrade double team moves so this wasn't horrible or anything. Kasai or Matsuzaki take a classic Stupid Japanese Indie Bump but doesn't land on his shoulder wrong- so he doesn't actually get the full Guiccone Indie Sleazeworld Award- but keep trying. HEY! Shadow Winger with a totally presentable Dragon Suplex With a Bridge. The boy keeps trying. Quite fine in the whole spectrum of things considering.....

Shadow WX vs. Mike Samples: I asked Tim Noel- while we were both on the air live during the last episode of the year of Wrestling Powerline 99- "who the hell is Mike Samples?" and Tim- being the magnificent bastard that he is- said, "He's this guy- from Kentucky I think- who started a couple of garbage leagues in the states and who has been in Big Japan recently." So there you go. He's kind of a big fat guy- but actually more like a guy who played offensive line for Appalachian State in the Seventies but who let himself go as he enters his forties- so there is that whole "My frustrating youth is gone and I'm definately going to seed now" empathy thing going for him. Samples definately knows his own cardiovascular outlay as he is able to make this GIANT spew of blood come a-flying from his head. This match was quite a blood-intensive rambling wreck that didn't really go anywhere- as they wander through the crowd illogically and randomly hitting each other in the head with crap as Samples does all these comical faces in an attempt to convey "selling the spot". They really do produce a wheelbarrow full of blood as they ramble through the seedy Big Japan Yakuza-in-training crowd. This wasn't very uplifting in a Deathmatch-As-Only-Tolerable-Performance-Art way or any other way; it wasn't workrate-intensive or very good. It's Mike Samples vs Shadow WX: you were expecting WHAT?

Dory Boy (Kojika) & Terry Boy vs. Abdulah The Butcher & Abdulah Jr. Kobayashi: Jesus, this was absolutely horrible. MEN'S should just retire. Actually, I dunno. I mean, fuckin A', put him in with other guys who can wrestle- as opposed to these two fucking grampas. Jiminy Fuck, is it too much to ask just for MEN'S Tieoh vs Abdulah Jr Kobayashi? That would be- you know- GOOD. Meanwhile, this sucked the beefdart like a ten minutes of Nitro.

Ryuji Yamakawa vs. Tomoaki Honma: This match is motherfucking GREAT. This is a big big FIVE on the Rusty bedsprings Bucket Of Blood sickness scale and there is SOOO much more to this match to give it the number one position in the annals of garbage matches. It was inevitable that the too best garbage wrestlers of the modern era would finally get together and see who is the sickest motherfucker alive (SURPRISE! IT'S A TIE!) and this is quite the document of how much the Japanese bloodsucking freaks are more hardcore than we will ever be. There is nothing you will see in the US that compares to this match in sheer WILL and in sheer scope of violence and personal disregard for fucking ANYTHING. When a Deathmatch

crosses over to the Better Place- a place where wrestling reinvents itself as this horrible allegory about what a batch of fucking life is and then it takes that horrendous despair and turns it upon itself, you get such the PURE ESSENCE of pro wrestling- a desperate, violent, unbeautiful, hated, hateful mongrel that cannot stop its own excesses and THEN if its a GREAT motherfucking Deathmatch, it willingly bathes and cleanses itself in its own attempt at horror and permanent mutilation to finally reach a state of horrendous catharsis and collapse of shame and terror and triumph and what have you. Either way, this is definately a match every wrestling fan should own so he can tell his non-wrestling fan friend, "welcome to my motherfucking world. We not exactly alike there, pally." The match-up itself has a strange dynamic going for it already- even before the first time anyone goes back-first into the barbed-wire. Yamakawa has gone from humble Kendo Nagasaki disciple to a much more exciting and freaky persona- as he now has a potent combination of a Mishima-as-suicidal-homosexual-artist rushing headlong into a kind of Occidental Joe Buck From Midnight Cowboy quality that combines to cut this riveting, desperate figure that adds as much danger to the match as any of the powerbombs onto broken glass. he has created this weirdass synthesis of a homosexual charismatic cult leader/rock star/psycho-garbage-wrestling- bloodsucking- freak, kind of a fucked up combination of Jim Jones, Shoji Nakamaki and Iggy Pop. Combine the sexuality of Yamakawa's projected persona with the crazed bitch called Honma. Honma is a great antithesis of Yamakawa in that he is Testosterone Overload. Honma's persona is of a psychotic, Methed-up fratboy ready to do ANYTHING to prove how little he gives a fuck about himself or anyone else. He is as latent as Yamakawa is overt and Honma's expressions of violence are a mask of his true-self- a fact that is in complete dichotomy to Yamakawa's self-expression through hideous, horrible violence. Yamakawa revels in the pain and violence and degradation- while for Honma, it is his personal gauntlet that he must run to prove his manliness in this totally fucked idea of manhood that he is trapped in and must escape. Add it up with wads of quality brawling, a bunch of barbed wire and flourescent lights, throw in a generous portion of ASTOUNDINGLY insane garbage spots, a really good story, a real attempt at selling and you've got you some quality professional wrestling on your hands. The match itself is put together really well- with the first big spot (honma flying backfirst through a barbed wire board. Keep in mind that Honma is totally motherfucking insane- doing a legit state-of-the-art Japanese garbage match wearing nothing but his kicker boots and his tiny UWFi-style pants) by Yamakawa getting the advantage by using lots of kicks and legdrops. Yamakawa uses the advantage of getting the first barbed-wire board throw to set up the brawl to the concession stand for two more shots to a table to facilitate one of the most obvious acts of blading ever captured on video- as Honma stands against the board and puts his favorite buddy against his forehead. After Honma is just blowing blood out of his head, Yamakawa gives him a Tiger Driver on a stack of chairs for two after they comically parody All Japan by doing the whole "Honma fights out of the Powerbomb by going to a knee but Yamakawa hammers his back and struggles to get his hands together to pull off the Tiger Driver". Details are the key to the success of this match. Honma is fucking mess by this point and they start the whole story of the match: first one to hit the bed of nails loses. After two running baseball slides by Yamakawa with Honma doing the cliff-hanging bit off the apron over the bed of nails, Honma gets his first big offensive transition by hitting a springboard dropkick to counter the third baseball slide- hitting Yamakawa in stride. Things like that separate this match from other deathmatches. When Nakamaki or even Cactus Jack have a deathmatch- the key is

simple sickness of the bumps without any actual wrestling skill or any physical wrestling prowess. This match takes it one step further as they use actual athletic wrestling moves to counter and execute some of the sickest bumps in the history of wrestling- bumps which include the tres swank toprope hurricanrana by Honma that puts Yamakawa through the barbed-wire board propped up on two tables, which had the added FUCKING GREAT detail of Honma covering Yamakawa with the barbed-wire covered board afterwards so that the act of kicking out by Yamakawa is just as horrendously painful looking as the bump through the table itself. This eye for detail also makes this match the number one and the best. It also includes the amazingly insane Jumping Tombstone off the apron onto the fluorescent light board which looked like it really sucked for everyone involved in more ways than I can mention- but the keys were that Honma is wearing tiny pants but is hitting the broken glass on his knees with all of his weight, MEANWHILE Yamakawa is taking a jumping Tombstone Piledriver through a board off the apron. It looked fucking spectacular. Either way, I liked the fact that there were true transitions in this match. When Honma went on offense, he hit his spots and Yamakawa sold each one as the true Japanese Indie Horrorshow that it was, and Yamakawa had a logical counter to go on the offense and Honma would sell it the same as Yamakawa sold it for him. There wasn't the Sabu crap of quickly setting up the next spot en leiu of selling the last bump with all of it slapped together without rhyme or reason; this match was drenched in the mechanics of a good wrestling match which is key for ANY match to work. The fact that this match has win, place, and show for sickest garbage spots in the history of wrestling simply puts it over the top but everything else they brought to the match is what got them to the dance. I liked that they actually beat the hell out of each other between spots- by either brawling or wrestling. I hate Big Japan Deathmatches because it's usually two over-the-hill nonwrestlers wandering around holding each other's hair walking to the next contrived crappy spot. This match thankfully kept that to a minimum- only succumbing to overly contrived looking spots when they carefully place each other's foreheads on the bed of nails which looked like it involved a lot of cooperation and looked really bad- and when Honma finally hits the bed of nails off the apron and afterwards Yamakawa basically helps him off of it, it's looks the same way. I'm guessing that Honma was supposed to roll off of it, but it's a freaking Bed of Nails and Tomoaki looks a little surprised about the hurtiness of the situation. The fact that both of these guys are actual accomplished pro style wrestlers that have had straight matches in the last six months that I thought were notable (as opposed to Nakamaki or Pogo or Mick Foley) add an element that they can't bring to a match, the actual wrestling and that is all the difference in the world. The finish is motherfucking great in its brutality and simplicity: Yamakawa and Honma have been creating a layer of broken glass in the center of the mat, Yamakawa has finally weakened Honma enough after Honma has just fucking ravaged Yamakawa's body with every hideous garbage spot imaginable. Yamakawa has finally put Honma on the bed of nails and has him in the middle of the ring and they both are standing in the broken glass so Yamakawa does an Underhook Facebuster for two and follows it up with a SPINNING UNDERHOOK FACEBUSTER ONTO BROKEN GLASS to get the win. This match was fucking harrowing. This match was absolutely GREAT and the best deathmatch I've ever seen. YOU WANT AAAAAAAAAALLLLLLLLLL THIS.

ALL JAPAN 1992 FAN APPRECIATION DAY COMM TAPE (4-18-92, Korakuen Hall)

(PETE STEIN)

Tape starts out with AJ's annual rummage sale^H^H^H^H^fan auction as the ring announcer soaks some poor fan for a green jacket that they probably glued "MISAWA" onto an hour ago.

DAN KROFFAT/DOUG FURNAS vs. MASTER BLASTER/DAVID ISLEY: Blaster is some LOD-looking guy minus the facepaint while Isley kind of looks like Richard Slinger. JIP with Furnas suplexing Blaster batty. He makes the room-temperature tag to Isley who hits a cross-body onKroffat, but the Can-Ams take over again. Kroffat hits the Sky-High Lariat with Isley on Furnas' shoulders, but Furnas FUBAR's the jack- knife and Blaster makes the save. Furnas takes out Blaster allowing Kroffat to hit the Kamikaze on Isley; Blaster makes the save but Furnas ties him up again and Kroffat hits a reverse DDT for the pin at17:31. What aired was short and uneventful.

MIGHTY INOUE vs. SATORU ASAKO: Asako's wearing green trunks and boots that make him look like Robin Hood (RIP) flipped him for his top and won. Inoue gives him some offense until Asako ducks off a whip and gets a Mighty DDT for his troubles. Inoue hits a Mighty SomersaultDrop, but he misses a second try and Asako connects with a fisherman suplex for 2. He follows with a reverse cradle but Inoue reverses it and scores the Mighty Pin at 13:21. OK while it lasted as Inoue was still Mighty Frisky at this point.

GIANT BABA/MITSUO MOMOTA vs. HARUKA EIGEN/MOTOSHI OKUMA: I'm beginning to think I look at the AJ comedy matches the way DVDVR looks at the various INDY SCUM groups... I mean I'll lean on the FF button for Liger/Kanemoto, but Baba and his cronies going to a 30-minute draw? Sign me up for that! Maybe it's because there's something cool about these guys chopping each other's nipples off between comedy spots, maybe because it's a neat little concept that WCW will never attempt because that would mean losing all their main-eventers to the midcard, maybe because I get a kick out of the entire ringside opening up their newspapers as soon as Eigen's spit-take is imminent... maybe because I'm nuts. Anyway, Baba pins Eigen with the Russian leg-sweepin 18:41 of blissfully uncut, perversely hilarious (in)action.

4X4 Survival Tag Match: JUMBO TSURUTA/RUSHER KIMURA/MASA FUCHI/YOSHINORI OGAWA vs. MITSU HARU MISAWA/TOSHI AKI KAWADA/KENTA KOBASHI/TSUYOSHI KIKUCHI: Essentially this is AJ's take on the "Survivor Series" concept. Match starts out as a straight tag match, and as members are eliminated new ones take their place until one team is reduced to one member. Grab a sammitch, folks... this one takes awhile.

KOBASHI/KIKUCHI vs. FUCHI/OGAWA: Kikuchi totally carries this fall as he allows his opponents to stretch the crap out of him in all sortsof hurty ways. Fuchi in particular plays Grumpy Bastard to the hilt,bending Kikuchi backwards over the turnbuckles with this look of "I love my work!" on his face and swaggering around while Ogawa gives Kikuchi what-for on the outside. Fuchi was too fun back in the early 90s before he got downsized to the comedy

matches. Kobashi finally gets the hot tag but Fuchi immediately plants him with the backdrop. Kobashi comes back on Fuchi and Ogawa and the match goes back and forth until Ogawa sits down on Kikuchi's sunset-flip try. Kobashi breaks it up but Fuchi takes him out, which allows Ogawa to take Kikuchi's head and use it to DRILL FOR OIL with a backdrop hold for the pin at 17:30.

MISAWA/KOBASHI vs. FUCHI/OGAWA: Misawa proceeds to get medieval on Fuchi and Ogawa's collective ass. Ogawa can get in all the token offense he wants... the outcome is never really in doubt here as Misawa and Kobashi work over his back throughout the fall. Kobashi eventually catches Ogawa coming off the top, turns it into a powerslam and hits the moonsault for the pin at 10:11.

MISAWA/KOBASHI vs. FUCHI/JUMBO: Jumbo gives Kobashi the bum's rush at the bell while his mini slaps a facelock on Misawa. Fuchi and Jumbo proceed to squash Misawa for almost 10 minutes until Kobashi finally tags in for the first time. Fuchi takes some abuse until he cuts off Kobashi with a kneecap dropkick and sends him into the crowd on the floor. Now it's Kobashi's turn to get abused as the Grumpy Bastards go berzerk on his knee, and Jumbo looks to have the match won with a crab until Misawa saves to some MOJO heel heat. Misawa tags in, gets a brief flurry and tags Kobashi back in. Kobashi hits the infernal rolling cradle on Fuchi, who thankfully kicks out at 2. Misawa tags back in, hits the Frog Splash and slaps on a facelock to finally eliminate Fuchi at 17:12 (almost 45 minutes total) while Kobashi ties up Jumbo.

MISAWA/KOBASHI vs. JUMBO/RUSHER: And suddenly Jumbo becomes the greenhorn on the team. What, was Taue hurt? Was Rusher actually the better worker of the two? Whatever the situation, this is the second "lame-duck" fall as Kobashi eventually falls to a pair of Jumbo backdrops at 10:52 (over 55 minutes total for young Kenta).

MISAWA/KAWADA vs. JUMBO/RUSHER: Rusher starts off and tries to use his headbutts on Kawada, but Yellow Boots says "This is the NINETIES, Gramps!" and blitzes the Rushing Link with some kicks until he makes the quick tag to Jumbo. Kawada stays in and deals with both codgers until Misawa freshens up and tags in at the "60 minutes gone" call. Kawada tags back in and decides to humor his elders by allowing Rusher to get in his comical headbutts and chop away at Kawada in the corner to a big "Kimura" chant, then for Rusher to hit the Bulldogging Headlock for a near-fall. Misawa saves Kawada from a Rusher single-leg (more solar heat) and Rusher takes him out, but this allows Kawada to get his wits back and kick Rusher in his face while still on his back. Kawada goes for the powerbomb; Jumbo saves but Kawada makes his own save, tossing out Jumbo and slapping a rear choke on Rusher until Jumbo comes back in and saves Rusher again. Misawa holds off Jumbo and Kawada re-applies the choke, but Rusher gets to the ropes. Rusher blocks a lariat try and goes back to the headbutts, but Kawada lands a successful lariat. Misawa heads back in to stave off Jumbo while Kawada hits a Bombs Away off the top, but Jumbo breaks free and saves Rusher. Kawada comes back with the Stretch Plum on Rusher, and since it's Chipped Beef night at the old wrestlers' home Rusher finally taps at 10:55 for the match while Misawa has the facelock on Jumbo. TRT: a whopping

66:40, and Kikuchi's already showered and dressed by the time he comes out to celebrate with his teammates.

Basically a one-match show, but that match was quite a doozy. The comedy match as fun too as long as you don't go in expecting it to be good or anything.

~@~

%^%^%^%^%^%^ Big Japan on Samurai TV 9/6/99 (Taped 8-10 Osaka)

(PHIL SCHNEIDER)

They held this card in what looked like the parking lot of the Osaka Dome. There was probably a New Japan show going on inside. If I was there I would be in the parking lot watching the Big Japan. ÓYou go inside and watch the epic Kensuke Sasaki / Tenzan struggle, IÓll stay here and watch Ryuji Yamakawa get a florescent lightbulb busted over his head.Ó

Kyoko Ichiki/ Andromeda/ Yoshiko Tamura v. Chihara Nakano/ Marcela/ Tanny Mouse: When itÓs womenÓs wrestling, and itÓs not JÓD, GAEA, JWP or ARSION, buckle up your in for a rocky ride. This actually didnÓt suck as much as I was expecting it to. Nakano is all kicky and shit, and actually worked a nice series or two with Tamura, who was all about the rolling kneebars. The Luchadoras (Marcela and Andromeda) stink like poop and Tanny Mouse is an embarrassment, but the rest of the match went along at a nice clip and didnÓt make me sick.

Spiderman v. City Monkey: Oh man, this is why you get tapes from foreign countries. Spiderman is an anonymous Luchadore (possibly a lost Power Ranger or member of the X-Men) in a cheap Spider Man Halloween costume while City Monkey is a guy in a Monkey Suit with a florecent pink ass. A PINK ASS I tells ya! Spiderman is actually quite the good little worker, as he busts out a bunch of intricate lucha headscissors and an Asai moonsault. City MonkeyÓs offense mainly consisted of monkey flipsÉ CAUSE HEÓS A MONKEY! Spiderman gets the win in a short match, with a Tiger Bomb. A Million Billion Stars. I canÓt wait for the big Ape Virgon v. City Monkey feud ÓYou sold out City MonkeyÉ You left your brothers in the jungle for the bright lights of the big cityÉWELL APE VIRGON IS GOING TO WHOOP YOUR ASS JUNGLE STYLEÉ DADDY!!Ó

Winger v. Black Bear: The cavalcade of comical outfits continues as mid-grade Big Japan junior heavyweight / garbage wrestler Winger (not the 80Ós glam band whoÓs poster Scott Keith had above his bed) takes on a guy in a Bear suit. Winger spends most of the match wishing he didnÓt goose Mrs. Kojika when he was drunk. Not much of a match as the guy in the bear suit isnÓt as good a worker as the guy in the monkey suit or the guy in the Spiderman outfit. He did hit a big plancha which was kind of ominous looking and would make me hand over my pikinik basket. Winger wins with a German Suplex proving they are just as afraid of you as you are of them.

Ryuji Ito v. Sekimoto: This was the lost WCW Worldwide rookies match. Ryuji Ito was sort of in the Elix Skipper Skinny young guy role , while Sekimoto was in the John Hugger role. Good little match, which starts with a nice series of amateur reversals. Sekimoto hit a couple of nice Greco Roman looking suplexes, and a good spear. Ito was all dropkick intensive, and busted

out some nice martial arts kicks too. Ito gets the win with a rear naked choke, and a fine five minutes of wrestling was viewed by all.

Abdullah the Butcher / Daikokubo Benkei / Masayoshi Motegi / Shunme

Matsuzaki v. MenŌs Teiho / Tomoaki Honma / Kamikaze / Mike Samples: Big Japan style clusterfuck which was actually kind of entertaining even with the talent level of some of the participants. Surprisingly even in a match with Mike Samples and Benkei, the biggest load in this match was the normally mediocre Motegi. He was dangerously sloppy on his suplexes, refused to catch both Honma and Kamikaze on their highspots, and was a general piece of crap throughout the match. Honma hit his usual Tommy Rich in Puerto Rico level blade job and was the best overall worker in this match. MenŌs Teiho has really degenerated in Big Japan as he has turned his Terry Funk obsession to less of an homage and more of an imitation, and he is now basically Gillberg with a fur coat. Abdullah did his thing, Mike Samples is quite the poor manŌs UWF-era Bubba Rogers, Matsuzaki is mediocre in the best sense of the word, Benkei is slightly better version of Koji Kitoa, while Kamakazi continues to be the worldŌs greatest fatass highflyer, with a super moonsault and amazing TAKAesque twisting top rope quebrada. Not great, but not that bad.

Shadow WX v. Ryuji Yamakawa: There are some wrestlers in Big Japan who could work anywhere in Japan. Tomokai Honma would fit in perfectly in BattlArts and could work New Japan JuniorŌs style as well. MenŌs Teiho has already proven his worth in the bigger leagues and Kamikaze has had some All Japan try-outs. Yamakawa and Shadow WX however are BIG JAPAN 4 LIFE. Both these guys belong with blood oozing out of arm gashes, and with pieces of lightbulb imbedded in their arms. Sure Yamakawa made an attempt to wrestle for about 6 months, he didnŌt work Death Matches, he stopped off in BattlArts, but it just didnŌt take. He is the Japanese Tommy Dreamer, he can feign competent wrestling, but he only shines while in the act of death (Tommy Dreamer is his stylistic equivalent, Yamakawa is both infinitely better and infinitely cooler than Tommy Dreamer.) WX however has no where left to go, WX is sort of the ontological argument for the existence of Johnny Grunge, he is the greatest Johnny Grunge there could ever be, his existence validates Johnny (and Axl Rotten and Balls Mahoney), as he takes the fat tub of lard who will bleed and die to unseen heights (I donŌt count Mick Foley in this category, while Foley in both a big fat tub, and a wrestler who bases his career around hot white death, he is much too solid a worker to fall in the whole WaXis.) This match was not the apex of the style the way Yamakawa v. Honma was, but it was a nice little death match. This was no-ropes-barbed-wire, florescent lightbulb, fire death match, and both guys do their share of dying. Yamakawa does the really cool entrance starting on top of a trailer, and then getting into a sports car. WX takes the best fire bump, but Yamakawa bleeds more, as he gets finished with a running Liger bomb on a handful of florescent tubing creating quite the blood splotch. Quality bloodletting, and another in a string of above-average Big Japan main events.

~%~

@#@#@#@#@#@#@# Michinoku Pro "How About It?" Commercial Tape - PART TWO

(PHIL RIPPA)

Way back in DVDR #98, I reviewed the first half of this goofy ass tape. Various matches from a six month span in 1994. Most of them clipped to shit. Here's the rest of the matches.

TAKA Michinoku vs. Monkey Magic (3/4/94) :Because when you think quality wrestling you think Monkey Magic. Pretty much a glorified squash with Monkey getting a couple of elaborate arm-drags in. Some comedic high-jinks ensue and TAKA wins. Yippee!

Wellington Wilkins Jr. vs. Yone Genjin (4/29/94): I'm glad that Yone is really popular with the crowd because he certainly doesn't bring all that much wrestling. Wilkins has the smeared peacock tights on which make my eyes hurt. Big boring brawl breaks out. If there can be such a thing as Sid level Kendo stick shots, they delivered them. They stumble back into the ring which allows Wilkins to no-sell a bunch of clotheslines. The general thinking is that when all else fails, do some crappy brawling. They end up outside and Yone is throw off a bridge into water. Relax, it was just a foot bridge. More brawling outside and in and up into the balcony. I have no idea what the official decision was. I wasn't going back to find out.

SATO/Shiryu/Kendo vs. Delfin/Naniwa/Rams (4/29/94)::I have checked two different match lists and they both identify this guy as Rams or La Rams. Here's why - he is a big fat guy dressed in a St. Louis Rams jersey right down to a mask that is a helmet. He even wears #12. The following people have been rumored to have been under the mask: Jackie Slater, Vince Ferrigomo, Eric Dickerson, Merlin Olsen, Deacon Jones, Lamar Lundy, Rosie Grier, Flipper Anderson, Norm Van Brocklin, Chuck Knox, FredDryer, Kevin Greene, Isaac Bruce, Tony Zendejas, Roman Gabriel, John Robinson, Crazy Legs Hirsch, Curt Warner, Tony Banks. Rams MOVE SET consists of the following - sub Duggan level shoulder blocks, chanting "MEXICO!MEXICO!" Big, big comedy match. If you have seen Delfin and Naniwa's act before then you can watch most of this match in fast forward.

Terry Boy vs. Shinzaki (9/15/94): Hey, now Mr. Lazy drags this baby down in a hurray. They two brawl around the crowd . They end up in the game room and Terry Boy piledrives Shinzaki on a Ping Pong table which was neat. Problem is that the match last at least another 5 minutes after this. Terry Boy takes his Terry Funk homage one step further by doing a big fat blade job for no apparent reason. They brawl up to the balcony. Shinzaki does the walk along the balcony railing which draws a favorable reaction from the crowd. Terry Boy teases a fall from the balcony. More brawling and again no clear cut victor.

Great Sasuke vs. Otani (9/15/94): I don't know if this match was reviewed before but if it was, oh well. This match is pretty choice and is consisted in two distinct acts. Act One is downright BattleARTSian. Otani works on Sasuke's arm with various armbreakers. Sasuke sells like a champ. Sasuke parries with his legs and even manages to lock in a few knee bars of his own. Kind of a neat little change from these two. Act Two is a full fledge New Japan Juniors match. Each man hits all the big moves and everyone kicks out of every finisher. Asia Moonsault, Tope Con Hilo, slingshot dropkick, powerbomb, German suplex, straightjacket suplex and splash mountain all make an appearance. Real fun to watch even if the first half of the match was abandoned for highspots.

The tape finishes up with a weird MPRO Miserlou segment. Watch as Gran Naniwa Meanie and Super Delfin Richards crack some jokes.

~*~

@#@#@#@#@#@#@#@#@#@#@# ATHENA : The spirits of ladies sports
(REV RAY DUFFY)

The show opens with hype for the 7/10/99 & 7/11/99 shows featuring the Mita/Shimoda v. ZAP I& T and Kyoko v. Hotta.
Highlights of WWWA Super Light Tournament.

Kayo Noumi v. Acute Sai : Hey, Kayo is really tall and cute. Yup. And throws a lot of drops. And that's all I have to say about that. Sai shows a bit more more variety in offense as the clips have her doing some doublestomps, a few ipponozeis and some drop kicks. However, Noumi ends upwinning with with a double wrist armsault.

Chaparita ASARI v. Momoe Nakanishi : This one's clips are high spots aplenty with a bunch of dives from both girls. Momoe counters ASARI's onedive with a drop kick. It seems like Momoe is in control of a lot of thematch and scores some near falls with a german and dragon suplex, but ASARIkicks out. ASARI drops Momoe with a release german and hits the Skytwisterand her new finisher, the Lyger bomb for the win. Here's a surprise, it doesn't look like she killed herself or her opponent with the Skytwister...for a change.

Sumie Sakai v. Kayo Noumi : Not really too much of this is shown. Kayo hits her drop kicks and the double wrist armsault, but Sakai seems to have more offense and generally controls Kayo before putting her away with atiger suplex in about 9 minutes.

Commando Bolshoi v. Chaparita ASARI : This looked to be pretty back andforth. ASARI starts with some drop kicks, but Bolshoi kicks up after eachone and challenges her to throw another. Bolshoi gets in her rope walk andthey both do quebradas to the floor on each other. Bolshoi hits two of her tope rope chokeslam/uranage moves. She avoids a skytwister and hits ashotay for a near fall. She hits another for another near fall. ASARIcones back and hits a Lygerbomb for two before Bolshoi reverses the pin.ASARI comes back with another Lygerbomb that looks like Bolshoi lands at a rude angle for the win.

Finals : Sakai v. ASARI : It should be noted that Sakai's whole neck and back look like they're taped on. Some back and forth action with both Sakai and ASARI not able to get an advatage. Sakai gets in control and hits an in ring quebrada for a two and a rolling back drop suplex for another near fall. They go out to the floor and Sakai does a dive off the stage of thebuilding they're in (MPro has done spot shows at this place too... hell, TedTanabe is the ref for this). ASARI gets in control and hits a dive off thepost. In ring again, Sakai hits a sweet top rope rana for a two. Sakaihits a moonsault and something that I think was supposed to be a rotationkick that Hikari used to use. Sakai goes for the Northern Lights Bomb, but ASARI flips out o fit and hits one of her own. A skytwister press whichends with ASARI landing with her head on Sakai's

head finishes the match. I know the Skytwister is cool and all, but in just about every match I've seen with ASARI, she either lands wrong and hurts herself or her opponent with the damn thing. I'm bummed this was all clipified. I think I would have liked ASARI v. Bolshoi because in Commando mode, she's worked her way off my shit list as a work from those early and annoying days I first saw of her.

More match clips :

The Bloody v. Miyuki Fujii is pretty quick and uneventful. The Bloody wins with a senton.

Tanny Mouse v. ZAP T : hey, it's Tanny. Even in clips of a 4 minute match she ain't good. Not enough mouse killing for myself.

Yumiko Hotta v. Kaoru Itoh : Hey, that Itoh character sort of wrestling like that ZAP I character... Itoh controls early with hip attacks and then the double stomp train starts. Watch them from ever imaginable place. In the ring, off the post, off a chair on top of one of the lower platforms of Koroken Hall. Itoh and Hotta start hitting each other real hard in the face followed by headbutts. They trade mounted slaps. Itoh gets in two double stomps from the post to the floor on Hotta and a top rope one in ring for a two fall. She double stomps Hotta's bad leg and goes for a leg submission, but Hotta rope saves. Hotta avoids yet another diving foot stomp and hits her wheel kick, but can't follow up because she's hurt. Itoh presses and runs into another and gets the Pyramid driver for a two. When Itoh kicks out, she's put in the cross arm breaker. As the time limit is running, Itoh hits another diving foot stomp, but the time limit expires before she can get a full count. Post match, both have seemingly kind words for each other and they shake hands.

Miho Wakizawa/Nanae Takahashi v. Kumiko Maekawa/Manami Toyota : Hey, my current favorite kicker and one of my least favorite wrestlers on the same team. To Manami's credit though, she is better than Shark... even if she sells like her sometimes. After taking an early beating, Wakizawa seems to get some offense in on Maekawa, including her rolling leg sleeper. Nanae seems to have pissed off Maekawa during the course of this and gets punted and good for it. The young gals throw Toyota around by her hair a bunch. Hey, Miho yells as much as Toyota... this isn't a good thing. Toyota fights off a Boston Crab attempt by Miho until Nanae runs in, puts the boots to her and helps roll her over. Of course, play time is eventually over and Toyota starts tossing Miho around by her hair and putting the boots to her. Miho gets in her body scissors pin move to counter another move. Miho gets dragged away from her corner before she can tag and Maekawa punts her a few times and puts on a leg submission. Toyota gets some more revenge stomps in. Nanae tags in and gets dropped with a thrust kick. Toyota exacts her revenge on Nanae with much glee as Maekawa holds Nanae in a camel clutch for Toyota to roundhouse kick and then they switch places. Nanae tries to set up the figure four/top rope splash spot with Miho, but Maekawa wisely slips out. They trade bites with all parties involved. The youngsters go for the figure four splash spot on Toyota, but she escapes it one, but not a second time. They switch places and Takahashi gets to do the splash one. Miho ends up splashing Toyota's feet and falls victim to a moonsault right on her face by Toyota. Miho and Toyota get in dives. Miho takes a double

diving headbutt but avoids an ax kick attempt and hits a near cradle. She's sporting a bloody lip from the moonsault (I believe). Nanae and Miho hit a near fall with with a superplex/top rope splash combo, but Maekawaeventually catches Miho with the ax kick for the put away. Good to OK match.

Hey, Fuji TV has Scissors League. Move over Iron Chef. Now we have IRON BARBER!

Miho and Momoe go to visit Kayo. Kayo has a thing for Pandas, including making clay pandas so they segment where they all make ceramic pandas. Hey, it's still better than Russo-vision. Learn a craft. During the break they have a commercial for all the tapes. Hey, the Pirates have a video too...and the cover shows both their racks and not their faces.... SERIOUSLY.

Clips from the 5/5 Neo Ladies show are shown.

Misae Genki fights Miho Wakizawa and beats her with the G-Driver.

Crusher Maedomori/Neo Ladies Ring Announcer v. Yuka Nakamura/Tanny Mouse : This is your Worst Bull Dyke In Prison Angle Ever angle. Shark runs in and teams with Crusher at some point and lay to waste Mouse and Yuka. Hey, let's blade Yuka and NOT TANNY MOUSE. Fuck you Neo Ladies. Post match, Kana Mizaki saves ring announcer who is still being bullied by the Useless Twins and sets up her angle with Shark... WHY!

Saya Endo v. Kumiko Maekawa: It looks like Fang and The Bloody have hooked up with Endo, and they interfere a bit but Maekawa still prevails. It seems like Genki and Tamura issue a challenge for her white belt during this.

Acute Sai/Tsubasa Kuragaki v. Momoe Nakanishi/Kayo Noumi : This seemed like it was a pretty balanced match from the clips, Momoe hits a german on Sai for the win.

Azumi Hyuga v. Yoshiko Tamura : Chopped up quite a bit. Azumi hits a Toyota-esque plancha to the floor, except she doesn't slip like Manami tends to lately. Tamura hits a near follow following a top rope Double WristArmsault followed by a regular one. Azumi keeps up the heat though, hits a spider german and a Michinoku Driver for the win in about 18 minutes.

A recap of the history of the Double Inoues leading up to :

Takako Inoue v. Kyoko Inoue : Takako's taking her theme music "She's a Knock Out" seriously as she's now sporting boxing type gloves in her matches. Kyoko dominates early and puts the boots to Takako until she crawls in the corner and grabs her stun gun. Kyoko gets zapped setting off the largest grease fire in the histroy of japan... just kidding. With Kyoko stunned. Takako has her way with her for a long time, putting the boots to her and generally being evil. At one point, Kyoko is face down on the mat, Takako sits on her and flips the crowd or camera man the bird. Kyoko plays dazed for a real long time getting in a few spots when Takako makes a mistake, but can't really capitalize on anything or follow up for a pin.

Takako punches her a bunch, drops her with some back kicks, the problem is she has to pick her up each time she knocks her down and that's bound to wear her out. Kyoko rallies with slaps, Takako goes for the stun gun again, but this time Kyoko cuts her off and the ref confiscates the weapon. Takako picks the largest target on Kyoko and hits her repeatedly in the stomach with body blows. Takako drops Kyoko on a table with her high back suplex, but it doesn't break, she then follows it with one on the floor. She fills the ring with chairs and knocks out the ref and gives Kyoko a few chokeslams onto the chairs. Kyoko counters with a back suplex on the chairs. Kyoko tries to go up top, but Takako catches her off the top with an arm drag. Takako starts delivering Destiny Hammers like it's a 4 for 1 sale at Penny's this week, but can't get a pin from it. Takako ducks a lariat and hits an uraken. She takes off her gloves and drops Kyoko with a cross that only gets her a two. Destiny Hammer gets no sold and Kyoko hits a german suplex for two, a lariat for two and then the Niagra Driver for the win. Kind of a lame thing. She sells the entire match and then just no sells at the end. Kyoko picked up a few cuts on her arm and back during the course of the match. After this it's over, Hotta comes out and has some words for Kyoko.

Not a bad show. Would have liked to have seen the finals of the WWWA Super Light Tournament since it was the finals and all, but I guess you take what you can get.
\$

MIKE NAIMARK'S SHOOTLAND, SHOOTLAND- MEMPHIS TENNESSEE...

By popular demand, this Death Valley Driver Review sets the wayback machine to a time when John Travolta was still washed-up, Kurt Cobain was still alive, and Steve Austin was still a midcarder. The year was 1993. Bill Clinton still wore pants to his cabinet meetings. A young Dana Carvey left Saturday Night live to conquer Hollywood. A handsome Miami lad prepared to receive his biology and chemistry degrees from the University of Mississippi, thus insuring a steady supply of nubile young babes would prostrate themselves at his feet in awe of his Academic qualifications. And every red-blooded American knew that real fighting was two men standing chest-to-chest, throwing their fists of fury with deadly intent at each others braincase. Oh sure, maybe you'll get some chop-socky ninja throwing a decapitating kick to the head on occasion, but the global fighting techniques on display in the Van Dam classic, 'Bloodsport' wouldn't lie, would they? Well on November 12th, 1993, the American viewing public was about to find out, as 8 men step into a bizarre caged ring in an event which boasted no rules, no time limits, and only two ways out - victory or defeat. A curious nation of boxing, pro-wrestling, and martial-arts fans eagerly ponied up their \$20, as the dawn of a new era in combative sports broke over North America.

UFC I - The Beginning.....

Quarter Finals:

1st Match - Teila Tuli (6'2 410 lbs, Sumo) v Gerard Gordeau (6'5 216, Savate)

Here's a tidbit for those of you out there who, like Dean Rasmussen, idolize Meng; rumor has it that Uliuli Fifita, who wrestles as 'Meng', was invited to participate in this inaugural UFC based on his backstage reputation as one of the toughest men in pro-graps. WCW quickly nixed that

idea, fearing that a poor performance by their resident tough guy in these uncharted waters would destroy his credibility in the ring. The UFC promoters replaced him with the 400lb sumoka Tuli, who lumbers to the ring in a stunning orange skirt, sporting what could be best described as 'Body by Abdullah'. Gordeau, a lanky, sallow looking stringbean from Amsterdam, has put down his bag of red-haired coffee shop tripweed long enough to kick a few European asses and earn an invitation to the first UFC, representing the sport of Savate, a French-spawned martial art that incorporates many dynamic kicking techniques and is only slightly sissified. The fight begins, and the bulbous Tuli wastes little time swarming across the ring at Gordeau, throwing wide palm strikes with his head down as he closes the distance. Gordeau remembers his elementary physics, sidesteps, and watches with bemusement as Tuli's momentum takes him past the place where Gordeau was standing just seconds before and smack-dab into the fence, depositing him on his beanbag-like ass. Gordeau measures the distance, takes a step toward the fallen sumo, and lambastes him straight in the middle of the face with a vicious left round kick. That little white blob flying from Tuli's mouth into the front row? Yep, it's a tooth! What better reason do you need to get ringside seats at a MMA event? Baseball fans can only hope for a ball! The referee immediately stops the fight as a dazed Tuli mutters something about not being hurt as blood dribbles down his chin like sawmill gravy. 26 whole seconds. Just think - if fate hadn't intervened, that could have been Meng's teeth getting knocked into the seats. Credibility killed, there would be no Kevin Sullivan-mandated Meng push, no defeat of Chris Benoit with the Tongan Death Grip, no path of no-selling across this great land. Of course, there wouldn't be the great commercial for pizza with Goldberg either. Does Meng saying, "Nope" constitute breaking kayfabe?

2nd match - Kevin Rosier (6'4 265 lbs, Kickboxing) v Zane Frazier (6'6 230 lbs, Karate)
Kevin Rosier looks almost exactly like Mad Man Pondo, for you US Indy 'sausage match' fans out there. Surely this kickboxing v karate matchup will deliver the kind of Steven Segal action that fans have been craving! Right? Right? The two men circle slowly, and I do mean *slowly*. Finally a few winging punches are thrown by Rosier, followed by a terrible front kick from Frazier. They clinch against the fence, expending enormous amounts of energy doing absolutely NOTHING. Both guys are gassed 3 minutes in to the match, and I feel like I'm ready for a nap myself. After a single straight right that catches Rosier over the eye, Frazier ends up taking the worst of the sporadic striking exchanges, but you can clearly see that neither of these guys can even *spell* muay-thai from their flacid infighting. Finally Rosier lands a thunderous kneestrike to the gut of Frazier, knocking the wind out of his sails and driving him to one knee. Rosier follows up with one of the most embarrassing offensive assaults in UFC history, stepping gingerly on Frazier's head with flat-footed stomps until Frazier's corner throws in the towel. Just over 4 minutes of utterly worthless pseudo-fighting.

3rd match - Royce Gracie (6'1 180 lbs, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu) v Art Jimmerson (6'1 196 lbs, Boxing)
So who is this skinny guy from Brazil anyways? And why is he wearing his bathrobe into the ring? Well, forget those questions, 'cause get a look at the *other* guy! A boxer with a well-manicured afro, Jimmerson enters the ring confidently wear ONE boxing glove on his left (jab) hand, with the other fist taped. Presumably, his strategy is to soften up the fuzzy lil' Brazilian before knocking him flat with a deadly haymaker. I guess that was his strategy anyway,

but Royce pretty much made a mockery of THOSE plans. Jimmerson throws a jab, Royce feints the front kick and immediately shoots for the double-leg. Jimmerson seizes up like he's been hobbled with a bolo from a Argentinian gaucho before toppling over to the ground, with Royce locked on him like a leech. Gracie quickly attains the full mount and grapevines the legs, totally neutralizing the bufuddled boxer. Gracie looks to finish the fight when Jimmerson suddenly taps out with his right (ungloved) hand. What did he submit to? Closer video inspection shows that Jimmerson submitted to, um, uh, your winner in 2:11, Royce Gracie!

4th match - Ken Shamrock (6' 220lbs Shootfighting) v Pat Smith (6'2 217lbs Tae-Kwon-Do)
In his prematch interview, Smith expresses his belief that he will win this tournament because he's the "most powerfulllest" person in the event. Shamrock was either unimpressed or missed the video as he quickly grabs a waistlock and takes Smith to the mat. Shamrock establishes his wrestling base as Smith tries desperately to get out from under his opponent, but Shamrock is too experienced on the ground. In a flash, Shamrock rocks back and grabs a leg, cranking on Smith's ankle violently. Smith tries to do the same to Shamrock, a common occurrence in Pancrase where the competitors are familiar with groundfighting, but Smith's powerfulness is no use against Shamrock's technicality! After a couple of worthless elbows to Shamrock's shin, Smith finally taps to an ankle pick at 1:49. After limping back to his corner in defeat, Smith suddenly realizes what a wuss he looked like and lunges at Shamrock, but his cornermen hold him back and undoubtedly saved his life, even though they were too late to save his dignity. Smith would be back in the next UFC however, and take out his anger on Scott Morris' face.

Semi Finals - Gerard Gordeau v Kevin Rosier

Rosier sports a whole handful of vaseline over his split left eye, apparently applied with a patching trowel, not unlike Deborah McMichael's makeup. The men circle tentatively for a minute or so before Gordeau closes and catches Rosier flush across the nose with a wicked right cross, sending the bigger American sprawling to the ground as Gordeau follows up with more punches. Rosier cowers and almost goes fetal with fear as Gordeau backs away, spies an opening, and returns with another strike; a kick here, a punch there, finally finishing the job with a nasty elbow strike to the forehead, followed with a heel stomp to the kidneys that reminded me of that time I peed blood for a week after a boxing match; the less said about THAT the better. The referee wins the race against Rosier's corner to stop the fight in about 2 minutes, as the Hash House Hammer advances to the finals of the first UFC. And Man Pondo has a WAY better workrate than this boob, and he'll fearlessly take the bumps, too.

Royce Gracie v Ken Shamrock

Clearly the big money match of the night, as the chiseled, muscular all-American boy goes against the swarthy foreigner. Royce demands the microphone and warbles a version of the Brazilian national anthem, which some of you might remember Buster Poindexter covering a few years back. You know, "O-lay o-lay, o-lay o-lay". And you thought Shamrock pulling on Pat Smith's leg was bad enough! The match starts and Shamrock fends off a shoot from the smaller man before sinking to the ground. Before anyone can realize what is happening, Royce Gracie quickly scoots to the back of Shamrock, who turtles up on the mat. Using the sleeve from his white Jiu-Jitsu gi, Gracie slips under Shamrock's throat and gently restricts his

breathing. Its all over in 57 seconds as Shamrock has no choice but to tap out or lose consciousness. Post match, Shamrock is interviewed and opines, "I'm not used to this kind of stuff", apparently meaning REAL FIGHTING, so even Ken Shamrock shares my dim view of Pancrase. Great showing, Shammy. Go work on your hurricanrana or something.

During the intermission to allow Royce time to prepare for his finals matchup, a ceremony takes place in the Octagon where Helio Gracie, the detsicated patriarch of the Gracie fighting clan, is awarded a plaque commemorating his status as 'The Original Ultimate Fighter'. Dozens of Gracies fill the screen, tempting me to make a joke about George Burns drinking too many martinis, which I tastefully refrain from. Royler Gracie, the men generally credited with bringing Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu to North America, leads the ceremony and hopes nobody will think its odd that he's the head matchmaker for this inaugural UFC, and Royce made the finals.

FINAL MATCH - Royce Gracie v Gerard Gordeau

It all comes down to this - Jiu-Jitsu against face-kick-fu. Gordeau has broken his hand against Kevin Rosier's bricklike noggin, but guts it out and enters the Octagon; later UFCs would see fighters withdraw from tournament finals due to mere fatigue (*cough* Ferrozo), so its nice to see a guy with true 'juevos', even if he's some cheese-eating European weenie. Gracie immediately grabs the waistlock and tries to drag Gordeau to the mat. Gordeau at least proves he's watched the earlier matches and works like hell to keep standing, working his way to the side of the Octagon so he can grab the fence for support. But with one hand and zero grappling skills, Gracie gets the inevitable takedown and Gordeau quickly gives up his back. As inevitable as the big boot and legdrop, Gracie takes advantage and sinks in the rear naked choke for the submission. And there he stands in the center of the Octagon, unbeaten and indeed untested, Royce Gracie shocked the martial arts world by easily plowing through the field and emerging without so much as a scratch on his chiseled mug. Editors for Black Belt and Kung-Fu magazines are seen slitting their wrists and weeping openly as the ninjas in attendance bitterly crawl up the walls of the McNichols Arena and make their way to the parking lot through the ventilation system.

 $\sim + \sim$ [illegible][illegible]

YOUR WRESTLER OF THE WEEK IS.....ULTIMO DRAGON!

Ultimo Dragon vs. Psychosis - Uncensored 1997- WCW- (PHIL RIPPA): I always felt that this is one of the forgotten good PPV matches from the last couple of years. Of course, this match had no build up and they through it as the second match behind a damn fine Malenko/Guerrero match. For all of you who are wondering, the main event was that 3-Way elimination tag match between Team WCW, Team NWO and Team Piper. Anyway, Dragon and Psychosis fearlessly take it to the mat for the first five minutes. For me, it's fun to watch. For the rubes in the crowd, they sit on their hands for the rest of the match. Dragon must have stolen some money from Psychosis or something because Psyc drops the guillotine leg drop right across Dragon's nose

and then drops a slingshot leg drop to the floor that crushes a couple of Dragon's ribs. Dragon busts out the handspring elbow to the guardrail, the Asai Moonsault, the running Lyger Bomb and a freaked out top rope Tornado DDT (at least that is what Tenay called it.) Dusty spits all over himself as he tries to call the action. A rollicking good time that last 13 minutes which is about 10 more minutes than they would have gotten on Nitro. It is also fun to watch because you can see why Mark Curtis was such a great ref as he flies along with the action, injecting himself properly into the mat-based sections which adds to that part of the match. Brian is going to be sorely missed.

ULTIMO DRAGON/MASAO ORIHARA (WAR) vs. JUSHIN LIGER/KOJI KANEMOTO (NJ)-12/11/92, Nagoya- (PETE STEIN): Judging from Jeff Lynch's tape lists I'm going to assume that this was UD's breakout match in terms of major coverage, as he and his lil buddy Orihara INVADE! JIP early with Team WAR working on Koji. Orihara starts to get fresh with Koji and we see some pre-natal dickishness as Koji gives him a MASSIVE pimp-slap before tagging in Liger. Orihara gets taken down by a Liger koppo kick and decides to get fresh again... lather, rinse, repeat. IMSMR* Orihara must've been walking around with a "PUNK ME" sign taped to his back based on the hellacious beatings that were inevitably dealt out to him during this timeframe. This fact is soon reiterated to me as Liger and Koji give him the "red-headed stepchild" treatment for several minutes. UD eventually tags in and hits Koji with a lariat, gives him a powerslam off the top and slaps on a Henkei Cavernaria. Orihara tags in, whips Koji to the buckles and connects with a shotgun lariat, then flips UD into a dropkick on Koji. Orihara slams Koji and heads up top, but Koji catches him with a dropkick. Liger gets tagged in and immediately proceeds to bring the pain to Orihara with his Goumon Romero Special, then tosses him out and hits a slide-dropkick. Orihara rolls back in but Liger steps out to the apron and KILLS HIM DEAD with a vertical suplex to the floor. Orihara's body gets rolled back into the ring and Koji gives it a throw-out German suplex, then poses on it to a big pop. Liger tags in and continues to defile Orihara's corpse with kicks and a rear choke, then Koji returns. He goes for a choke of his own but Orihara's leg spasms and takes out Koji, then somehow it rolls over to tag in UD. (I'll stop now. ;) UD takes over with a spin kick and a nasty little tombstone on Koji, then tosses Liger outside with a backdrop and hits a corner tope on him. Meanwhile Orihara hits a German suplex on Koji for 2 but Koji comes right back with a spin kick and his twisting senton for 2. UD saves Orihara and trades near-falls with Koji until Koji sends him to the floor with a shoulder throw (.85 Jerry Bump) and follows with a pescado. Orihara follows with his Orihara moonsault and Liger wraps up the highspot train with a tope atomico onto the pile. Liger kills Orihara a second time with a TFPB on the floor while Koji rolls up UD for a near-fall and follows with a backslide for another one. Koji hits the tiger suplex but Orihara saves to NUCLEAR heel heat. Liger tosses Orihara out and heads up top while Koji props UD on his shoulders, then gives UD a Sky-High Plancha. Liger hits a TFPB and follows with the Liger Bomb UD kicks out. Koji tags in and tries for a splash but UD moves. He goes for a suplex on Koji but Liger gives him a koppo from behind, leading Orihara to take Liger out. Koji goes for a shoulder-throw but UD lands on his feet, gives Koji an enzuigiri and a German suplex, then hits a Liger Bomb for the upset at 18:04 as the crowd goes DEAD SILENT. Really cool stuff as UD and Liger were still very much the insane luchadores, but everyone was on here. Ah, the interpromotional wars...

* IMSMR = "If memory serves me right"- got the first DVDVR Iron Chef reference in! YES! =)

(Ray made the first Iron Chef reference in DVDVR history this issue but Pete didn't know it at the time, so humor young Mr Stein. He is quite an adorable good egg. Think about it, won't you? thank you - dean.)

Ultimo Dragon vs El Felino- 10/6/94- EMLL- (DEAN RASMUSSEN): While AAA was doing fifty highspots a match and shaping the lucha perception of a whole generation of wrestling fans as they all went on to high profile misery (for the most part) in WCW, Ultimo was in EMLL having EMLL matches in EMLL with EMLL Godhead El Felino and this was quite the strong suit of Ultimo's Lucha existence- since Asai was THE best in the world ever from the standpoint of getting over ANYWHERE he ever wrestled- first bigtime in Mexico, then bigtime in Japan and- finally- bigtime in the US. Of course his US timing was pretty perfect because God knows what the shitheads who run WCW would try to do to him now. This match was basically a meeting ground for UD and Felino. UD - who is actually a more Puroresu-styled wrestler though his influence and innovation are felt throughout the Lucha world- actually probably moreso today as he is now a promoter on two continents- goes more Puroresu than he was wont to do in Mexico. And El Felino- who was just starting to show signs of the Lucharesu leanings that would make him one of the best wrestlers in the world by the late nineties before falling off the face of the earth (or jumping to AAA, take your pick.) Anyway, this starts on the mat, as Felino goes with a Luchafied Fujiwara Armbar that UD reverses into standing position where he starts in with the Ultimo kicks- suitably toned down for the Lucha Libre level of stiffness. He hits a Springboard Elbow, a Brainbuster and a LigerBomb for the first fall- so the Puroresu vs Lucha backdrop is established. The second Caida is almost a mirror of the first Caida as Ultimo starts with advantage on the mat, but he stays on the mat with Felino longer as Felino counters out of the Japanese Junior Heavyweight Headscissors Mat Spot by getting UD into a leglock. Ud escapes and counters it into a halfcrab as UD and Felino say "Hey! How bout some matwork there, Sparky?" Felino counters out, hits a elbow drop and body slam and a Moonsault to set up a submission that cracked a 4.6 on the Dr Cerebro Preposterous Lucha Submissions Scale- a kind of Bow and Arrow Backbreaker With a grapevined leg to Key Ultimo Dragon's Arm. BAFFLING! The third Caida is kind of an extended finishing sequence-as they trade spinning kicks to the face after Felino misses his second Moonsault attempt, they botch a La Tapitia completely and then trade a bunch of suplexes. UD counters a Belly-to-Back Suplex by Felino into a pinning predicament and they go all Lucha roll-up hogwild. UD catches Felino in a Full Nelson for a beautiful Dragon Suplex with a bridge for the win. Juventud, Rey and Psicosis do the right when they try to emulate Ultimo for about every reason. This match was pretty much a solid effort by a Luchadore who was two years away from breaking out and a Puroresu legend who usually left his REAL "A" game in Japan. Ultimo was always at least great wherever he wrestled and I'm glad he is still bringing his quality brand of wrestling to me through his students. When you think about a major cog that holds together giant sections of wrestling worth giving a shit about, you have got to think Ultimo Dragon and his influential career and his massive and varied body of work- whether through his work with WAR, EMLL, WCW, AAA or the whole 94-97 Liger's Junior Japan Vision- and the vast array of wrestlers he influenced.

Nobody else so aggressively keeps producing cool wrestling at such a pace as Asai- and YOU AND I better thank our lucky stars that he came around and is still around.

~*~

[illegible]

\$

.....

NEXT WEEK: GAEA! OZ ACADEMY! TORYUMON! SINGLES GOING STEADY RETURNS!

SOME KIND OF A WRESTLER OF THE WEEEEK!!!!

THE DEATH VALLEY PLAYBOYS.

six fists in the face of wrestling

Who can sleep in this heat- tonight....

-ROXY MUSIC. BOTH ENDS BURNING.

[illegible]